

# There's Got to Be a Santa Claus!

(EDITOR'S NOTE: One of the best answers to the complaint (scant but disturbing): "Merry Christmas! Shopkeepers' holiday! Bah!" is this thought-provoking article by Channing Pollock, noted author, playwright and lecturer. It appeared in the December Rotarian Magazine through whose courtesy it is reprinted here.)

WHEN SHE was a very little girl, my daughter asked, "What would you do if there weren't any trees?"

"Why," I answered, lightheartedly, "we'd have to invent some. We couldn't get on without trees."

There are quite a lot of things — food, shelter, clothing — we couldn't get on without, and a number of wise men have made my suggestion — we'd have to invent them. What we must have even more than these are food for the mind, shelter for the spirit, that which clothes the nakedness of mere animal existence, and gives warmth to human contacts.

We celebrate Christmas as a religious festival, but a Christmas was celebrated hundreds of years before Christ. The ancient people of the Angli, in what is now Britain, had in December a Modranecht, or "mothers' night." There had to be a day set aside for kindness, and generosity, and remembering those we love, and those less fortunate.

Before and since Dickens wrote his immortal "A Christmas Carol," there have been a few Scrooges who cried of Christmas, "Bah, humbug!" I have heard modern Scrooges call it a shopkeepers' holiday and a nuisance, but for the overwhelming majority of us, as for Scrooge's nephew, it is "a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of in the long calendar of the year when men and women open their shut-up hearts freely . . . I say God bless it!"

There is a certain magic in a day when even strangers bid us be merry; when the mail and telephone and telegraph and all the means of communication commonly devoted to business bring cheery wishes for "Merry Christmas!" Shopkeepers' holiday? Bah! Humbug! It isn't a necktie or a dollar bill that we slip into the hand of the janitor or the postman; it's good-will and thank you for a year of service. It isn't a toy train that we put under the tree for Junior, or a muffler that we wrap in red tissue for Aunt Julia, but the knowledge that Junior has always wanted a train, and Aunt Julia has needed a muffler, and the loving desire that, just this one day, they shall have what they want and need, and that we shall see the pleasure in their eyes, and feel the warmth of their joyful kisses.

Believe it or not, and smile if you like, but, at—well, say 60, my wife and I still hang up our stockings. What a lot of love and laughter and tenderness goes into the trifling gifts we select for those symbols. We trim our little tree with bright stars and tinsel, and for days ahead, in secret, we write messages, and wrap

things in gay paper, and hide them from one another until the morning of mornings.

Shopkeepers' holiday! Was it only a shaving kit I could have got for myself that went into that starchy package, or was it my daughter's heart that remembered the time, ages ago, when I said, "Damn that old razor! Some day I'm going to have one that fits into my hand properly!"? What about the crate of oranges that comes every Christmas from a colored elevator boy in Florida? I can buy better oranges, but I can't buy what comes with these.

We dine every day, but there is only one Christmas dinner. For years that was a family festival, with all our dear ones about the table. Most of them are gone now, and our Christmas guests are people who, whatever their means, have no home of their own. Why? Well, when I was 19, and away from my home for the first time at Christmas, a very lonely lad, the mother of a chap employed in the office with me asked me to her home. I never saw her again; she has been dead nearly 40 years, but she and that dinner live in my memory.

Last Christmas my wife and I had half a dozen old actors, forgotten now, and we talked of the great days in the theater, and lived them again until long after midnight. Irene Franklin, who had been the idol of vaudeville, sang several of her best songs to us, and a very old Shakespearean actor repeated — and how! — the soliloquy from Hamlet. It took Christmas to restore their heyday for an hour or two, and that memory goes on our golden pile of Christmases.

During a radio broadcast not long ago, I met the middle-aged woman who, as a child of 8, wrote to the New York Sun, "Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?" Every year the Sun reprints the reply it made editorially in 1897: "Yes, Virginia there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist . . . There is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah . . . in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding."

Of course there's a Santa! And if there weren't, he would be the very first of the things we'd have to invent. Life must have love and a little childlike faith to be enduring; and the year must have at least one day when we are more conscious of faith and love than of business and bombs and all the realities nobody doubts—and nobody wants!



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## CUB SCOUTS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAY

In observance of their first anniversary as a unit, members of Cub Pack No. 241, received a number of awards and enjoyed a large birthday cake at the regular monthly parents' pack meeting last Friday night at the St. Andrew's Guild hall. Cubmaster A. C. Turner presided.

The pack was a year old Nov. 30. Service stars were presented to the following charter members: Larry Fischer, Harrison Rose, Ver Non Greene, Bill Roos, Jerry McIlvaine, Kenneth Mosher, Lory Watson, Dick and Jack Turner. The boys honored Rev. Paul Wheeler, new assistant cubmaster, with a "grand howl!" and the vicar spoke briefly to the parents about Cub Scout work. L. E. Ross, chairman of the committee in charge of the Pack, reviewed the year's activities and introduced his committee members: Fred Fischer, Dan Mosher, L. F. Watson and the Den Mothers, Mesdames Fischer, Watson, H. G. Bartlett and A. C. Steele.

Turner gave Lion awards to Mrs. J. J. Millard for her son Bill and to Mrs. Claude Stevens for her son Walter. A Wolf badge was presented to Jimmy Baird, Gold Arrows to Richard Mitchell and Walter Stevens and a Silver Arrow to Dick Turner. Each den gave a short stunt and the meeting closed with a "Living Circle." The birthday cake, made by Mrs. M. R. Gallimore, was served.

## Junk Collector Fails to Get License; Must Face Judge

Unable to obtain the city council's approval of his request for a junk collector's license, Thomas R. Drulin of Los Angeles must now take his chances before Judge John Shidler. Drulin was arrested about two weeks ago for collecting without a license and Shidler gave him two weeks to get one. The council Tuesday night refused his request when Councilman George V. Powell pointed out: "We have two licenses out already for the collection of junk here and we have considerable difficulty tracing stuff picked up by them by mistake now."

## Wards of State Will Enjoy 'Sweet' Christmas

Inmates of California's various institutions will enjoy a "sweet" Christmas, according to State Finance Director George Killon. He said today approximately 16,000 pounds of Christmas candy has been ordered at an average price of 8 1/2 cents per pound delivered. About 7,000 pounds of assorted nuts also have been requisitioned. Prices ranged from 10 1/2 cents per pound for peanuts to 22 cents per pound for pecans. Almonds were eliminated this year as the best price quoted was 52 cents, Killon said. In addition, Christmas gifts for distribution to working patients at the institutions were purchased at a cost of \$9,979. They included sweaters, pipes, shirts, neckties, socks, handkerchiefs, watches and cosmetics.

## TORRANCE HI NEWS

By BETTY FOLLIS

### ALLIED YOUTH . . . Mr. Braggs, general chairman of National Allied Youth, spoke to the student body Tuesday, outlining the purpose of the organization and its accomplishments. Several students from South Pasadena also gave short talks.

**WINNER TOLD . . .** Last week I promised to reveal which team won the Girls Playday. The victors were members of the Red team for the third successive year. Next year the Reds will again face three determined opposition squads.

### Quail Exhibit At Library

How many of us know that we have State birds as well as State flowers, and that the one chosen as typical of California is the Quail or Bob-white? An exhibit showing California's state bird in its natural habitat will be displayed during the next 30 days at the Torrance library.

The exhibit has been designed in order to bring to the attention of the public a full knowledge of the life, history, distribution, and food habits of this important bird. A full understanding of its habits is a necessary aid in furthering public interest in bird conservation.

This exhibit is one of a series of 12 prepared by the Education Section of the Los Angeles County Museum, in cooperation with the Los Angeles County Public Library.

### Home Developer Wants Street Improved

Reporting that he was shortly to begin construction of a six-house project on Martha ave., near Hawthorne and Sepulveda blvds., George P. Thatcher, Manhattan Beach contractor, wrote the city council Tuesday night requesting that Martha be improved at once. He said the street was in bad condition. The request was referred to the city street and engineering departments for investigation.

Two Japanese newspapers have a circulation over one million.

## Bulb Culture Requires Careful Attention to Soil and Moisture

By HARRY H. STONE, Instructor Vocational Agriculture, Torrance High School

"It's bulb planting time," may be said almost every month of the year in Southern California. Although some of them were perhaps better set out a little earlier, the planting of many can well be continued. Ranunculus and Anemones give about as much satisfaction as any. The small spider-like bulbs are planted legs down, in full sun. The soil should be kept only fairly moist until blooming, then wet well. These are most effective when planted in a mass—not just a dozen or two, but a hundred or two, six inches apart.

Amaryllis and Callas are not so frequently mentioned in the planting instructions, for once planted they stay planted. Amaryllis prefers considerable sun, while the Calla does better in at least part shade, with moisture. It is a native of swampy areas of Africa which dry up in summer, so that treatment is indicated.

The so-called Dutch bulbs are not now imported, of course. Most of the United States crop of Tulips and Hyacinths is grown in Washington and Oregon. As that climate is suitable, then ours is not so we have to make allowances. Plant deeply—five to seven inches under the surface—with sand under the bulbs for drainage in heavy soil. Sun or part shade will do. Our climate is so unfavorable that they do not reproduce well, so if a gardener must have tulips, he must be willing to buy new bulbs each year.

### JAWING AROUND

When Hitler becomes angry, he chews a rug. Smaller shots in the Hitler regime must content themselves with chewing the rag.

Gather Cormels Carefully Many other bulbs thrive in Southern California. So well, in fact, that the bulb growing industry has increased ten million dollars annually since the war cut off importations. Freesias, Sparaxis, Ixias from Africa, Dutch and Spanish Iris multiply freely. They want quite a bit of sun if they are going to show to the best advantage. If planted two or three inches deep and six inches apart they will reward you well. These are easy to grow, for they may be left two or three years in place before digging up the increase. Dahlias have finished their bloom, so may be cut back to a foot above ground. If the space is not needed for other plants they may well be left in place until March, at which time they may be dug, separated, and replanted. Gladiolus bulbs have matured and most people have dug them. After they are dried



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